Gay rights leader says it may be time to call off the boycott

State groups vow to continue with strategy

Gazette Telegraph and news services

The leader of a national gay rights organization said Friday it may be time to call off the boycott of Colorado and find other strategies to overturn Amendment 2.

But Colorado gay rights groups quickly said they don't want to drop the boycott.

Torie Osborn, the new head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington D.C., says the boycott needs to be reassessed and other actions considered so the campaign against Amendment 2 will "remain politically potent."

Gay rights groups began the boycott after the state's voters in November passed Amendment 2, which bans laws that protect gays and lesbians from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The measure is on hold pending a court decision on its constitutionality.

Osborn, who called the boycott an "unqualified success," told a gay rights group in Colorado Springs on Thursday that she will spend the weekend in the state considering whether the boycott should continue. Possible alternatives, she said, might include focusing on the upcoming legal arguments over Amendment 2 before the Colorado Supreme Court and Denver District Court.

Osborn said Thursday that the boycott may have reached a crossroads. "I think we're at a re-evaluation time," she said.

But Denver-based Boycott Colorado and Colorado Spring-based Ground Zero say they will not back off the boycott.

"As far as reassesing strategies, that's something we do all the time," said Ground Zero spokesman Franklin Whitworth. He said the national organization should follow the local groups' lead on whether to continue the boycott.

Boycott Colorado officials, who planned to meet Friday night with Osborn, said the boycott remains viable.

"We feel it's the right way to go, and we'll need to drive that point home with the national leadership," said Terry Schleder, a Boycott Colorado leader.

The national task force's spokesman, Robert Bray, echoed Osborn's comment Friday in a telephone interview from Washington.

"To remain politically potent as possible we constantly have to evaluate, to reassess our most effective strategies and devise ways to shore up and strengthen our plans," Bray said.

The boycott caused several organizations to cancel conventions in the state; officials estimate that $39 million was lost.

But heavy snowfall attracted record numbers of skiers to Colorado this winter, and Deborah Cornelius of the Colorado Tourism Board said Friday that summer bookings are ahead of where they were last year at this time.

The brisk summer bookings probably are due in part to Denver's new Major League Baseball team, the Colorado Rockies, and Pope John Paul II's planned three-day visit to Denver during August's World Youth Day celebration.

"I don't think it's (the boycott) been without its effect, but on the individual travel industry we've been really experiencing a strong year," Cornelius said.

LEGISLATURE

plan on sentencing

sponsored amendments reducing sentences for nonviolent crimes. He maintained that nonviolent offenders had no business taking up prison space with life sentences. He pointed out it costs $1 million to keep someone in prison for life.

The bill's intent is to systematically cut back on the number of prisoners given long sentences in order to keep pace with increasing convictions.

The demand for prison space has grown since the Legislature doubled maximum sentences in 1985. The state's prison population has increased during the period from about 3,000 to 9,000.

The sentencing issue, which was one of the top priorities when the session started Jan. 13, continues to be a priority as the session heads toward its Wednesday conclusion.

An amendment that was defeated Friday would have moved down drug possession by one felony class, shortening sentences.

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BALLOT ISSUES: The House gave final approval to SCR4, a proposed constitutional amendment sponsored by Sen. Ray Powers and House Speaker Chuck Berry, both Colorado Springs Republicans, that says initiative or referendum issues must be confined to a single subject.

OBSCENITY: A proposed constitutional amendment allowing cities and counties — but not the state — to decide what is obscene and should be kept away from minors died in the House.

PUC RAISE: The House approved a bill giving Public Utilities Commission members a $10,000-a-year pay raise.

COORS FIELD: The Senate delayed a vote on a bill permitting Denver's baseball stadium district to claim property behind home plate at Coors Field held by a landowner unwilling to sell.

SCHOOLS: A House-passed proposal to establish standards-based education was

Romer signs sch

Associated Press

DENVER — Gov. Roy Romer on Friday signed into law a school finance bill that raises state spending $205 million over this year, but will result in a 4 percent drop in per-pupil funding in Colorado's 176 districts.

HB1304, sponsored by Rep. Norma Anderson, R-Lakewood, earmarks the $205 million for inclusion in the $2.5 billion 1993-94 school budget for K-12 education in Colorado. About $5

Governor approves $

Associated Press

DENVER — Gov. Roy Romer signed into law Friday the state's $7.57 billion budget bill for fiscal 1993-94, vetoing only a few headnotes and footnotes that he said present constitutional problems.

The record budget, the first prepared under provisions of the tax- and spending-limitation Amendment 1, cleared the Legislature with nearly three weeks remaining in the session.

Amendment 1 exc

Associated Press

DENVER — A resolution to allow voters to decide whether to allow local governments to be excluded from Amendment 1 drew initial approval in the Colorado Senate on Friday.

Amendment 1, approved by Colorado voters in November,